



Mayor's Medal of Honor

AWARD RECIPIENTS

2019

Tyler Aug

Artistic / Cultural Achievement Award

“Tyler Aug is a native of Rochester, and spent time living in Chicago, Los Angeles, and the Twin Cities, where he earned a degree in film studies and media production from the University of Minnesota. It was in Rochester that he learned essential production skills outside of higher education: how to build community and connection, and how to make your own opportunities. According to Tyler from his recent interview in the Current, “ Even if we’re getting paid to cover certain people’s things, I always believe in being able to support anybody who needs support.”

He has helped thousands of local artists, musicians, performers, cultural events, poets, and more by connecting through his filming and serving in the C4 arts board. He has also recently had a documentary, called The Crows, with three sold out performances at Grey Duck Theater. Tyler had worked on this for over 3 years and it is amazing as a commentary piece with humor and series points to how the crows have influenced Rochester residents and life in our city.”

Tyler Aug has been amazing local Rochester artist leader who has helped promote thousands of other musicians, Theater groups, local cultural and artistic events with artists over many years with his artistry. He has been involved as a board members of C4, involved with helping promote Art Blitz, has helped various arts organizations around town such as the RAC, Rochester Civic Theater, and many more local events! That’s not all as he is a co chair of the Rochester Posse which helps spotlight many musicians, artists, events, Theater and more! He is co-owner of an amazing art establishment , Canvas & Chardonnay, that has opened its doors to many in the creative art community be it from music, drag shows, lgbtq+ dance parties, painting classes, fiber arts, yoga, and more! Tyler Aug is an important artistic pillar in this art community and leader. If it wasn’t for him—- so many of us in this town would not know of all the creative events, people, and more that happen locally. He works hard, selflessly, and shares his creative time with others.

12/10/19

Naura Anderson

Excellence in Industry Award

“Naura Anderson is a creative professional with more than a decade of experience in the local arts community. She grew up in Southeast Minnesota, studied Studio Art at St. Olaf College, and from 2006-2015 worked for Rochester Art Center. During her time at RAC, Anderson served in a variety of program and administrative roles including: museum store management, arts education, public programming, special events, community engagement, publications, and curatorial work. She currently runs an arts consulting business, providing marketing support, graphic and web design services, and arts programming for local nonprofit organizations, artists, entrepreneurs, and community groups. As the director of [Threshold Arts](#), Anderson manages special events and arts programming for The Castle. She also operates the The Art Store on the second floor of the building.

Threshold Arts, a nonprofit arts organization, holds a master lease with Castle Community, LLC for a large portion of the building, and is responsible for leasing the Creative Studios, oversight of the programming of the Castle Commons, Community Studio, Turret Gallery, and Event Hall.

Castle Community welcomes artists, creative professionals, entrepreneurs, and more.

Threshold Arts offers memberships to creative individuals and small organizations which include options for a studio space on the second floor, priority access to larger shared studio space, classroom, and gallery spaces, shared artistic and professional resources, and other membership perks.

She also serves on the Board for the Rochester Downtown Alliance.”

Naura has been an advocate for local musicians and artists for some time. She has worked at the Rochester Art Center around 2005 and continues to shine with her arts advocacy at the Castle Community through Threshold Arts that provides local assistance for artist spaces, music and performance venues to perform and create for cultural events, visual art events, performance, and music. Also her newly opened Neon Green Art Studio is a valuable community arts and crafts resource for all ages and stages of creative life to explore their artistic side.

12/10/19

Natalia Benjamin

Educational Excellence Award

Natalia Benjamin, an EL instructor at Century High School, is an amazing advocate for all of our students. She works with students in a wide range of EL classes, she teams with teachers in English Language Arts as well as science, she tutors, she creates extra-curricular groups, she spearheads events to bring our community closer together and she always has the health, well being and academic interests of our students in mind. Natalia works tirelessly to make that all students have access to the resources available at school and has a constant eye out for things that might be barriers to students being the best they can be. She has worked to bring activities to improve the social emotional learning of students including mental health speakers and weekly coloring for relaxation. She serves on our site action team and works to make sure our entire building serves our student body with open minds and open hearts. Natalia serves on a number of state boards through the teachers union and the department of education. She is the epitome of a life long learner as she is constantly attending workshops and trainings to better herself as an educator. She has also provided many inservice opportunities for our staff around the topic of best practices for English Language learners.

12/10/19

Andy Brownell

Personal Achievement Award

Creative, open, positive attitude, perseverance, Rochester Famous, good bowler, coach, passionate, grateful, resourceful, are all words used to describe this nominee.

The Personal Achievement Award is given to an individual who has demonstrated outstanding achievement in overcoming their personal disability or circumstances in the service of others.

A person with a physical disability experiences a lot of barriers in their lifetime, Andy Brownell is not one to let his disability get in the way.

While Andy and I have never officially met, I am a fan of his energetic and entertaining radio program, Rochester Today, on KROC AM. I listened to him for many years before realizing he had a disability. I remember being so amazed the day I found out, like I should have picked up on it because I have spent more than half of my life working with people who have disabilities. This demonstrated to me that Andy is not one to let his disability define who he is.

So when Ed Hurska mentioned Andy during the review committee meeting, we immediately agreed that Andy is deserving of this honor.

I spoke with those close to Andy for this nomination, first was Ed...

One day I gave Ed a call to learn more about his connection to Andy. I learned that he and Andy were long-time neighbors and shared different responsibilities within their neighborhood. Ed told me his observation of Andy was that he was always positive and grateful and did not dwell on his limitations. For example, he may not have been able to throw snow like some of his neighbors but his fantasy NASCAR and Football stats were on point! Ed commented that he regularly observed Andy rise up to meet his challenges with open eyes and a positive attitude and never asked for consideration or accommodation, only finding creative ways to do what needed to be done.

Andy's daughter Alyssa had this to say: The quality that I admire most in my dad is his perseverance. He has never once allowed his physical limitations to deter him from setting and reaching his goals. When faced with an obstacle, he will work tirelessly to come up with a creative solution. Examples range from rigging up electronic curtains so he can open them independently to putting hot rod wheels and pin stripes on his van to make it look less like a wheelchair van and more like a car-show worthy vehicle. He is my biggest role model and has taught me to work my hardest to achieve my goals and to always be thankful for what I have. He lives life with a grateful heart and strives to be a better person every day. Instead of using his circumstances as an excuse to do less – he sees them as a reason to do more and be more.

From his son Jerry – I respect my Dad so much for working so hard to stay independent. He could rely more on technology but he fights through to do as much for himself as possible. I admire that he is still bowling in a community league and finds a way to still compete – nobody picks up a split like my Dad!

And this from Tom Ostrom – As a fellow radio colleague and co-host – Tom will tell you that Andy breaks the mold of a radio host because he is so modest – which is not normal for a radio personality and is so proud of him personally and professionally.

And finally Andy's wife Laurie – Andy always finds a way to contribute whether at home or lending his knowledge to a colleague. One of my favorite stories is when our son was young and he wanted to help out with feeding him and so we put a pillow on his lap and he was able to feed him his bottle – although he forgot to do one thing – turn off the power on his scooter. Jerry kicked the power switch and they both went crashing into the glass patio door – they both let out a big scream and were just fine – the door – not so much! Andy will tell you that he was so fortunate to be born and raised in Rochester - the best city on the planet and is grateful for the opportunity to contribute and work with so many wonderful people.

In conclusion I would like to share a couple of quotes I read that reminded me of Andy's story:

Disability is not a brave struggle or courage in the face of adversity. Disability is an Art. It is an ingenious way to live.

~ Neil Marcus

It is not the disability that defines you; it is how you deal with the challenges the disability presents you with. We have an obligation to the abilities we DO have, NOT the disability.

~ Jim Abbott

So without further ado, I present 2019's Personal Achievement Award to Andy Brownell.

Anjali Donthi

Youth Serving Community Award

I have worked with Anjali for over four years in a program called Technovation. It is an international program that brings girls together to identify and solve community problems. It allows girls to give back to their communities while learning how to write computer code, create and pitch business plans. Over the last four years, I have watched Anjali blossom from a shy girl to a leader with a passion for finding and solving issues that impact people in the Rochester community.

The applications that Anjali helps create are geared towards problems within the Rochester community, specifically, youth hunger, homelessness, problems that immigrants face, and mental health. For their 2019 application, a mental health app called discoverME, the team is planning to work with MedEd to productize the app and make it available to schools and local organizations.

Anjali's Technovation teams have been very successful. They have made the Technovation International Semifinals three of the last four years, and been in the MNCup semi-finals, twice. In 2018, her team won a \$10,000 prize from Sunrise Banks for writing an application that helped immigrants find resources in their own language. This year, her team was a MNCup finalist and took 3rd place in the Youth category, winning a \$2,500 prize.

In addition to Technovation and her many school-related activities, Anjali gives back to her community by working with Black Data Processing Associates (BDPA), and volunteering at Mayo Clinic.

Anjali volunteers her time to the Rochester community in many ways. She is always looking for ways to help. I highly recommend Anjali for the Mayor's Medal of Honor Youth Award. I am confident that Anjali will continue to give back to the Rochester community, while leading and inspiring others to do the same.

12/11/19

Jeanette Fortier

Senior/Elder Achievement Award

We are honored to nominate Jeanette Fortier for the Mayor's 2019 Senior/Elder Achievement Award. J is a volunteer at all three campuses of the southeast Minnesota Madonna Living Community (MLC). This includes residents in Independent Living, Assisted Living, Memory Care, Nursing Care and Rehabilitation. Jeanette volunteers weekly, giving of her time and outstanding musical talent in a variety of ways.

In the Nursing Care and Memory Care units, she plays the guitar and organizes weekly sing-alongs for the residents. To accompany her seemingly endless repertoire of old familiar songs, each resident is given a set of bells and the halls come alive with the sound of music! Those who struggle with verbal communication keep time with the beat or begin to sing. A resident in Memory Care starts to dance! Even on the major holidays, Jeanette gives of her own personal time, bringing treats and special songs to celebrate the day.

With her guitar and sweet singing voice, Jeanette leads the music for religious services - weekly in nursing care and sometimes plays for other services as well. One resident said, "She plays hymns that we knew in our childhoods!" Through her music, she also provides emotional support for residents and their families, as life is ending.

The staff experiences how Jeanette's volunteering assists in promoting wellness and stress management at the Madonna Communities. During a busy and stressful day, the staff has been known to stop for a few moments of relaxation to listen to her music. Because of her selfless giving to elders in our community, we are honored to nominate Jeanette for this award

Mary Pat Jewison, BSN, RN
Faith Community Nurse
Sister Sue Reif OSF,
MLC Coordinator of Spiritual Care

Miriam Goodson

Champion of Diversity Award

The recipient of the 2019 Mayor's Medal of Honor for Diversity represents the heart of what it means to be part of an inclusive community.

She is a tireless champion of ensuring that everyone has the tools they need to be successful. She knows firsthand that the whole community benefits when we honor and promote the diverse ideas and talents of the individuals from around the world who call Rochester home.

It all started when she moved to Rochester more than 20 years ago. At the time she had graduated at the top of her class in engineering from a renowned university in Mexico. Yet here she couldn't get a job using her engineering degree.

That's not to say she didn't use her engineering mind when she began working for the Rochester school district as a Spanish interpreter though. In that role she saw the need for additional tutoring for Hispanic students, especially in math, and she helped ensure that there would systems in place to support them.

To do so, she helped start and continues to run Juntos, a volunteer tutoring program held Saturday mornings throughout the school year. Yet her commitment to helping others succeed doesn't stop there.

If a child cannot make it to tutoring, she goes to their home and picks them up in her own vehicle to bring them to the Heinz Center. She also keeps them engaged by organizing big Juntos Christmas parties and summer trips to Whitewater State Park and ensuring those who are tutored grow up to become tutors.

Plus, while the children receive homework help, their parents, who are often first-generation immigrants, are tutored in English.

And while Juntos started off as program for Hispanic students, it's always been open to whoever needs the help and draws students from various immigrant groups.

That is the same for all that she does. She is committed to learning and responding to the needs of our local immigrant communities, and has worked closely with the Somali and Cambodian communities to name a few.

She has served with various organizations including Families First of Minnesota, Southeastern Minnesota Interfaith Immigrant Legal Defense, the Isaiah initiative, the Rochester Healthy Community Partnership and ACHLA-the Alliance of Chicano, Hispanic and Latin Americans. One of the greatest examples of her work is volunteering with ACHLA to bring the mobile Mexican

Consulate to process passports on site annually in Rochester while bringing together local organizations to make the line for passports into a community resource fair.

She is also involved with helping preserve the faith and traditions of the Latino community.

She has been a long-time advocate and volunteer at St. Francis of Assisi Church in building up and supporting the Spanish Masses and its Hispanic ministries.

Over the years she's also helped organize community festivals, including Latino Fest and Cinco de Mayo celebrations.

Her compassion, enthusiasm, and energy are unmatched. So is her humility. And while she doesn't take credit for her accomplishments, she gives credit to her faith for giving her the stamina and power to keep on going.

She truly puts her whole heart into everything she does. While a lot of her work is on a large scale, it's her one-on-one, helping hand that makes an immediate and lasting impact. Because of her open heart and generous spirit people feel confident reaching out to her even in their most difficult times.

She has made inclusion, honoring cultural heritages and identifying and removing barriers so that all people reach their highest potential her life's work and passion.

I am honored to present the Mayor's Medal of Honor for Diversity to Miriam Goodson.

12/10/19

Ivan Idso

Sustainability Award

Ivan's Contribution to Sustainability

Since moving back to Rochester in 2011 Ivan has been active in the “sustainable” community

In 2014 helped to organize a Climate Coalition (consisting of several area organizations and churches with like views) to address actions needed to address climate change and part of that resulted in Rochester's first ever Climate March but more importantly brought all of these groups together to work toward a common goal

In 2014 Mayor Brede made the 100% Renewable by 2031 Proclamation (Ivan assisted in the bullet points of that proclamation)

2015 marked the first annual Earthfest celebration-Ivan co-chaired this event for 5 years. Earthfest is a weeklong celebration of the earth and provides education and resources to the community. It creates inspiration and opportunities to develop a more environmentally-sustainable community. 2020 will be the 6th annual event under new leadership.

In 2014 Ivan and Mary purchased a home built in 1890 and over the next 3 years did a complete renovation of the home incorporating as many energy efficiencies and sustainable elements as financially possible. They moved into the home in 2017 which is “near” net zero and Includes: passive solar, 4.7KW solar PV system with battery backup, radiant heat, air source heat pump, double wall insulation and a green roof overhang. The Home Energy Rating (HERS) rates a score of 32-68% less than an average home. The yard will incorporate permaculture design and edible landscape with water catchment and is an ongoing project. They have given countless tours of their home....Ivan will even bring people in off the street 😊

In 2018 Ivan completed a permaculture course to become a certified Permaculture Design Consultant

2019-Worked with Rochester Community Education Adult Enrichment to create a new category of Sustainable Living classes and reached out to experts in the community to offer those classes. In its third session the category offering has doubled in size.

2019-Ivan co-founded Transition Rochester-a group formed to promote a sustainable lifestyle that transitions away from fossil fuels.

Instrumental in the ongoing dialogue and education with our public utility (RPU) in order to adopt sustainable fossil free energy options. RPU now has a fossil free plan in its future infrastructure plan. Ivan is working with folks in the community and Citizen's Utility Board to

create an educational program to be presented to citizens and community groups regarding the benefits of fossil free utility infrastructure.

During Ivan's career in Mayo Clinic's Healthcare Technology Management department he has worked to implement sustainable and energy conservation options for the acquisition, maintenance, and disposition of biomedical equipment. Ivan has taken Mayo Clinic's value of stewardship to heart and was instrumental in the creation of a responsible redeployment and parts re-use program for biomedical equipment. Ivan is also helping Mayo Clinic reach energy conservation goals through the investigation of opportunities and implementation of energy conservation programs relating to biomedical equipment.

Ivan is on the board of the Lowertown Neighborhood Association whose mission is to help create a healthy environment with sustainable community infrastructure and promote neighborhood cohesiveness.

Recently a goal was achieved when the Idso household downsized to one car which is an EV with a range of 238 miles. This means more walking, biking and public transit. Ivan is happy to see more EV fast chargers coming to the region next year and is doing what he can to promote these in Rochester.

12/10/19

Jere Lantz

Mayors Award

This years winner of the Mayors Medal of Honor has impacted lives of every age (from very young children through the elderly) here in Rochester, across the state and throughout the world. In 1980 Rochester was a town with a predominately white population of 57,890 - today we are a far more multi cultural town of 116,000 and growing. When you can survive and thrive through all those years of changes you're doing something very right. And sometimes that might mean appearing as Beethoven during an educational program.

This years MMH winner, Jerre Lanz, has a long and impressive biography which includes being the artistic director of the Rochester Symphony - which is celebrating its 100 anniversary this year - for the past 40 years, including being its President/CEO for the last four years. Jere is known for imaginative programming, his ability to share the "story behind the music", his dedication to bringing music to our youth, and his ability to deliver dynamic and stirring performances. While Jere will be leaving the CEO position this year, he will continue to conduct and bring stirring music to the area.

In addition to his leadership in Rochester, Maestro Lantz has served in Minnesota as Music Director and host of the Minneapolis Pops Orchestra, Minneapolis Chamber Symphony, Kenwood Chamber Orchestra, St. Cloud Symphony, and Minnetonka Choral Society. He has been interim conductor of the Winona Symphony and Mankato Symphony, Assistant Music Director of the Minnesota Opera, and Founding Music Director of the Minnesota Opera Touring Company. He has guest conducted both the Minnesota Orchestra and the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra.

In addition to guest conducting across the US, Jere has also led ensembles in locales as far-flung as Europe, China and Latin America. Sought for his understanding of music and its role in today's world, he has served as an advisor to the Minnesota State Arts Board, American Composers Forum, Minnesota Public Radio and the Conductors Guild of the League of American Orchestras.

For his distinguished forty-year commitment to the Rochester Symphony; his service to and with musicians, choral singers, audiences and the arts; and for his leadership in innovating ways to educate, engage and inspire area youth with offerings like Honk*Squeak*Scratch*Boom, & 4th Grade Concerns; and effort to reach new audiences with creative programs and free family programs; and for his unique ability bring great music to life, I am pleased to recognize Jere Lanz with the Mayors Award for 2020.

JoMarie Morris

Human Services Award

Our top nominee for this year's Human Services Award, serves as the Executive Director of the Jeremiah Program - in Rochester,

The Program seeks to end the cycle of poverty for single mothers and their children, two generations at a time - in SE Minnesota.

She is working diligently to address issues of affordable housing, early childhood education, intergenerational poverty, and development, among families headed by low-income single mothers.

She sets high expectations for young women to further their education and to prepare their children for success at school.

She provides opportunities and tools for young mothers, most of whom come from challenging backgrounds and life situations. Through significant community engagement, our nominee collaborated with local leaders, citizens and from local, state, and Federal governments, to build a 65,000 square foot, 40-apartment campus and on-site child development center on the land near the intersection of Valleyhigh Drive NW and 19th Street.

At this site, mothers will earn a post-secondary degree, and while a college degree is a predictor for family prosperity, single mothers in Rochester face an especially daunting journey on the path to earning a post-secondary degree.

They must juggle classes & homework, childcare, job, and running a household alone. Because of the work that our nominee has done, and continues to do, the Jeremiah Program in Rochester will both strengthen the economic vibrancy of the area and proactively help young families headed by single mothers walk the path from poverty to prosperity.

Prior to becoming the Executive Director of the Jeremiah Program, our top nominee did significant pro bono work relating to domestic abuse, sex and labor trafficking, and citizenship for refugees.

She is a pillar in our community seeking the best for her neighbors by giving the best she has to offer through companionship and caring service.

Our 2019 Mayor's Medal of Honor for Human Service is...

JoMarie Morris!

Steven Schmidt

Excellence in City Service Award

Paul Fleissner:

I am going to thank Steven for the Riverside Concerts and then I was going to use the following two quotes and thank him.

Chinese Proverb

A bird does not

Sing because it

has an answer.

It sings because it has a song.

Plato-

Music gives a soul to the universe,

Wings to the mind,

Flight to the imagination

And life to everything.

Steven's ongoing dedication, passion, and commitment goes above/beyond a pay check. He takes great pride in finding the right fit for each and every program that he has created, without Steven many people would never hear free live music. Sunday evenings in Mayo Park is a 29 year tradition. Our community hears and learns about World Music each year through programs such as; Artists in Schools for our 3rd graders, Mini Library Concerts, the successful Thursdays on First/Third and the newest series; ForWARD which is brought directly into the neighborhoods of each ward. Steven has always felt that music is to be shared, the above mentioned programs are a testament. Steven's passion reaches further yet, Chairing the Minnesota Presenters Org., Chair of VSA MN; an organization dedicated to supporting those artists with Special Needs, member of several nominating committees; The Ordway's Sally Award (winner for commitment in 2016); MN State Arts Board, International Folk Alliance, and teaching many classes at National and International conferences across the country. He never hesitates to help a fellow promoter/producer, and he is known through out this country by Talent Agencies as an "honest, easy to work with man, who is always looking for just the right fit for his community". It is my hope that Steven is finally recognized for what is in his heart, it is who he is, a man passionate about spreading music throughout his community. Thank you for your time.

12/11/19

Danielle Teal

Community-Wide Service Award

This person, Danielle Teal, is the founder of CAKE (Caring Acts of Kindness Everywhere) and a community influencer for kindness. Danielle has touched the lives of many throughout this community in immeasurable ways. From making sure to feed those with food instability to providing informational resources to those who need a hand in making their own lives better. Never does a chance pass her by where she doesn't instill love and kindness in all situations. Danielle can rally a crowd based in love and kindness within a day to help a fellow community member in need. She never expects a payback or acknowledgement for the work she does but I believe there is not a more worthy person for this award than Danielle who so selflessly helps others and possibly more importantly inspires others to do the same in the name of kindness. This is why I am pleased to share the recipient of the Mayor's Award for Community Service is my friend and inspiration, Danielle Teal.

12/10/19

George Thompson

Legacy Award

I first met our Medal of Honor recipient of the Legacy Award in the mid-1990's as he was a part of the leadership of a group I had an interest in – the Rochester Amateur Sports Commission. But from the first time we interacted I have marveled at his kind and confident demeanor he always portrays.

He was born and raised in St Louis and went to college in Atlanta where is lived with his aunt during college – perhaps it was her quiet self-confidence that rubbed off on him. For her name was Alice Coachman Davis – an Olympic gold medalist in high jump that had never shared her story or success about her achievement with him for many years, he later shared she simply “never talked about it” and he added “she never bragged about anything”.

And maybe it was her talents that also was an insight to his bloodline of athletic success. He was a basketball and track star in college (he still could dunk a basketball at the age of 64) and once you learn his name you will connect the athletic talents of his children and grand-children. However, this award is not being given based on athletic ability but more so based on decades of community leadership and service.

I could try to list off all of his accomplishments and his ongoing support and impact on all those he interacts with but I am sure I would miss a few – he has touched every sector of our community for over fifty years and is still involved in several areas – making a difference. I feel very fortunate to be able to call him my friend. When you think of kindness, respect, honor, quality and maybe most of all – humbleness and dignity – you have the 2019 Mayor's Medal of Honor winner of the Legacy Award – Mr. George Thompson.